

The Perfect Valentine's Gift: Help Your Loved One Quit Smoking

February is American Heart Month, so before you think about what kind of flowers or type of candy to buy for Valentine's Day, choose the Valentine that is better than any box of chocolates or bouquet of expensive red roses: show your love by supporting your sweetheart in quitting smoking.

According to the CDC, smoking is a leading cause of heart disease. Smoking leads to the narrowing of blood vessels and high blood pressure and quitting smoking greatly improves heart health.

Give Valentine's Day new meaning by helping your loved one become a nonsmoker. If your sweetheart is thinking about quitting, here are some ways your gift of support can encourage them along their journey:

- 1. Let your sweetie know you'll be their quit partner for as long as it takes – a smoker usually attempts to quit an average of 7 times before they quit for good.**
- 2. Remind them that going cold turkey is not always the best option. Recommend that they talk to their doctor about stop-smoking medications. Smokers who get support and use stop-smoking medicines are nearly 3 times as likely to quit for good!**
- 3. Help them celebrate the small victories – like the first 24 hours of being smoke-free, the first week, or the first time they make it through a stressful event without smoking.**
- 4. Bring them little treats like sugar-free gum, mints, and healthy snacks to help keep their hands and mouth busy.**
- 5. Distract them from cravings and help them relieve stress – take a walk with them, send them a reassuring text, or just run an errand together.**

If it seems like your loved one is in a bad mood, try not to take it personally – nicotine is a very addictive drug! Quitting smoking is one of the most difficult things they will ever do.

Lastly, it is common for those attempting to quit to slip up and have a cigarette. If this happens to your loved one, don't be discouraged or critical. Help them think about what they learned from that quit attempt and remind them of all of their good reasons for quitting. Most importantly, let them know you're there for them when they're ready to try again.

To learn more about how you can help your loved one quit smoking, visit makesmokinghistory.org and click on the "Quit Now" tab.

This Valentine's Day and American Heart Month, give the perfect gift; show your beloved just how much you care with the gift of support, and, ultimately, heart health.

Tina Grosowsky, Project Coordinator

Central MA Tobacco Free Community Partnership

The Central MA Tobacco-Free Community Partnership supports communities' efforts to lower smoking prevalence and exposure to secondhand smoke; enhance state and local tobacco control efforts by exposing tobacco industry tactics, mobilizing the community to support and adopt evidence-based policies, and changing social norms. Funded by the Massachusetts Tobacco Cessation and Prevention Program, Community Partnerships serve as a resource for local coalitions, health and human service agencies, municipalities, and workplaces on tobacco intervention efforts.